

September 28, 2012

Ms. Sandra Manning
Project Manager, Regulatory Branch
Department of the Army
Seattle District, Corps of Engineers
PO Box 3755
Seattle, WA 98124-3755

RE: McMillin Bridge

Dear Ms. Manning,

Thank you for distributing correspondence between the Corps, WSDOT, and Pierce County summarizing the June 14, 2012 meeting held to discuss alternatives to preserve the McMillin Bridge. In light of this correspondence, the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation has several responses.

Based on the meeting summary, transferring ownership of the McMillin Bridge to Pierce County clearly is not a feasible option from the county's standpoint, regardless of any available funding that might accompany such a transfer. Yet the meeting notes indicate the option of WSDOT retaining ownership of the bridge was discussed. This scenario envisions utilization of the McMillin Bridge as part of the Foothills Trail. The county again responded in the negative, citing concerns over the long-term maintenance and repair needs of the concrete structure. If WSDOT were to retain ownership, however, the assumption is long-term repairs and stewardship would be the agency's responsibility, relieving the county from any future bridge-related fiscal burdens.

As a consulting party, the Washington Trust would like clarification as to whether the discussion of WSDOT retaining ownership of the bridge included agency responsibility for routine inspection and structural maintenance. Under this scenario, Pierce County could enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with WSDOT for janitorial services. This concept appears consistent with the county's insistence against owning aged infrastructure for fear of future costs. Moreover, WSDOT could set-aside funds proposed for demolition (be it \$500,000 or a number greater than this – no official cost estimates for demolition have been presented to date) within the agency to address future repair needs. With the bridge closed to vehicular traffic, such repairs should be minimal over time.

From the June 14, 2012 meeting notes, we understand WSDOT has not agreed to any option whereby the agency retains ownership of the structure. This stance remains perplexing. With the

Indian Timothy Memorial Bridge, there is precedent for WSDOT retaining ownership of a bridge structure after it is taken out of service. Despite this, the agency maintains that its mission is to keep people and business moving – not to preserve historic and cultural resources. Yet the section of WSDOT's Environmental Procedures Manual pertaining to historic bridges states "Demolition should be considered the last resort" (Section 456.08 (8)). Additionally, the State of Washington includes a policy directing state agencies to "designate, preserve, protect, enhance and perpetuate" historic resources (RCW 27.34.200). As a state agency, WSDOT is subject to this policy. The respective goals of keeping people and business moving and preserving historic resources are not mutually exclusive. The overall significance of the McMillin Bridge coupled with the technical feasibility of retaining it provides, in our opinion, an opportunity for WSDOT to adhere to its stated mission while complying with state policy as cited above. And given the federal permitting nexus for this project, Section 106 brings the weight of federal law to bear in requiring WSDOT to seek avoidance of adverse impacts to historic resources.

From the onset, the project included removal of the McMillin Bridge to mitigate adverse (yet mostly temporary) effects to the riparian environment derived from construction of the proposed new bridge. From a permitting standpoint, these two, distinct actions were rolled into a single undertaking. Yet removal of the McMillin Bridge constitutes a significant adverse effect to the historic structure and should rightly be reviewed as a standalone project. Technically speaking, the McMillin Bridge need not be removed for the new bridge to be constructed. WSDOT can mitigate the identified adverse effects of the new bridge construction in other ways – removal of the McMillin Bridge as mitigation would, in a phrase, be overdoing it. If pursued, removal of the McMillin Bridge should require a separate permitting process as an undertaking independent from other projects.

Thank you for continued attention to this matter. The Washington Trust looks forward to continued discussions as a consulting party and appreciates the investment of all involved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chris" and last name "Moore" clearly distinguishable.

Chris Moore
Field Director

Cc: Chris Jenkins, USACE
Roger Kiers, WSDOT
Matthew Sterner, DAHP